

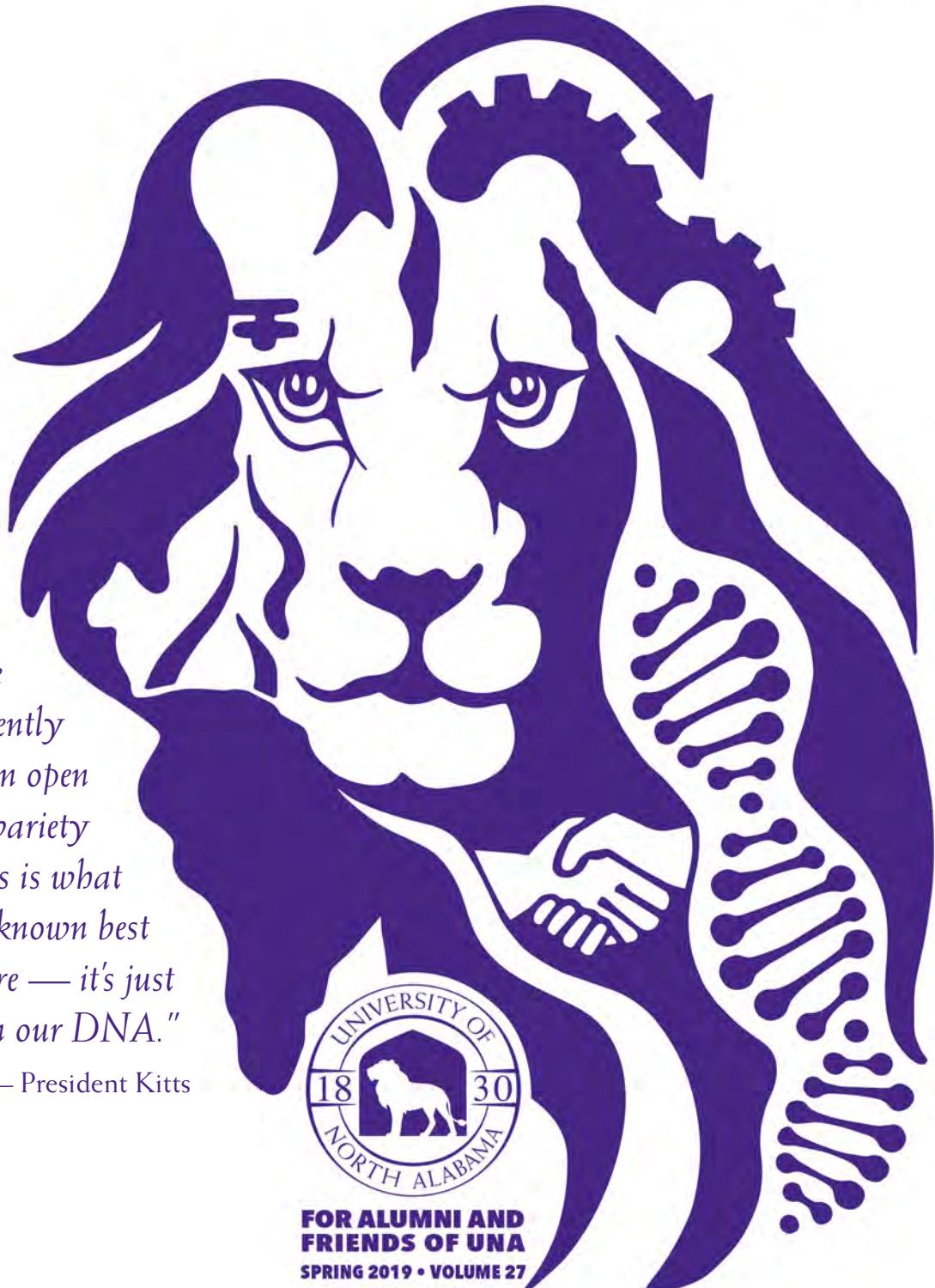
# UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA MAGAZINE

*"Thinking  
about the  
world differently  
and having an open  
mind to a variety  
of perspectives is what  
people are known best  
for here — it's just  
in our DNA."*

— President Kitts



**FOR ALUMNI AND  
FRIENDS OF UNA**  
SPRING 2019 • VOLUME 27  
NUMBER 1



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FOR ALUMNI AND  
FRIENDS OF UNA  
SPRING 2019 • VOLUME 27  
NUMBER 1





The UNA Alumni Association hosted the fourth annual Lions Under the Lights and it was another night to remember. Lions Under the Lights is an exclusive fundraising event that showcases alumni, students and local business. Thanks to the sponsors, chefs and dedicated supporters.

# UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

SPRING 2019 • VOLUME 27 • No. 1 • FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF UNA

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*Information contained herein is as it currently exists but  
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Kenneth D. Kitts

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Kenneth D. Kitts

Friends,

Welcome to the Spring 2019 edition of the *University of North Alabama Magazine*. As this new season of renewal and vitality approaches, I want to share my excitement about the future of our institution. On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., to take our message of funding equity to the federal level, I reminded our congressional delegation of the vital role UNA plays in Alabama's economy and of the inherent connection between education and quality of life. It is our mission to ensure the success of our students, and we take this responsibility seriously. Throughout this magazine you will find tangible examples of our commitment to maintaining the highest standards in academic achievement and relevancy in today's job market.

We are preparing our students for success in an evolving economy by

unveiling innovative new programs and partnering with different entities to make education more accessible. Employers in today's market are seeking out graduates with a hybrid skill set: businesses need employees with "soft skills," while STEM fields are looking for people with the business acumen to sell new products and inventions. We must provide experiential learning, hands-on training, and an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

On the following pages, you will read about these partnerships and programs. We continue to strive for excellence and to expand our academic footprint. It is our mission, our responsibility, and our calling – and it cannot be achieved without your support. On behalf of our students, thank you.

Ken Kitts



2019 Lighting of the Fountain

Dear Alumni and Friends,

I am often asked what exactly does the University Advancement Office do? I am more than happy to answer that question, because it gives an opportunity to better inform those who have an interest in what makes UNA tick. In general, our goal is to "advance" the mission of the University. We do that through four departments:

- **Alumni Relations**
  - Alumni Association
  - Alumni Clubs
  - Events and Activities
- **University Communications and Marketing**
  - Website
  - Graphic Designs/Publications
  - Photography/Videography
- **Development**
  - Fundraising
  - Campaigns
- **Financial & Database Services**
  - Management of Funds and Endowments
  - Alumni Records

We have a great team of dedicated individuals who work hard each and every day to advance UNA. I am proud

to be associated with them, and you can be proud that they are working hard for you. I also feel fortunate to work alongside several highly motivated and experienced senior leaders who all want our University to be the best it can be. Dr. Ken Kitts has encouraged us to think big, work hard, and put service above self. Add to this successful formula a team of active and involved volunteers and you get a winning combination that highly benefits UNA. The University's student enrollment is up, fundraising is at an all-time high, academic programs are receiving national attention, and our athletic programs are exceeding expectations for their first year in Division I. Overall, it is a great time to be a Lion!

We are very proud of the number of endowments in the Foundation, which total an all-time high of 347 for this year, and consist of the following categories: scholarships (321), programs and professorships (22), and eminent scholars (4). Because of these endowments, the Foundation was able to award almost \$2

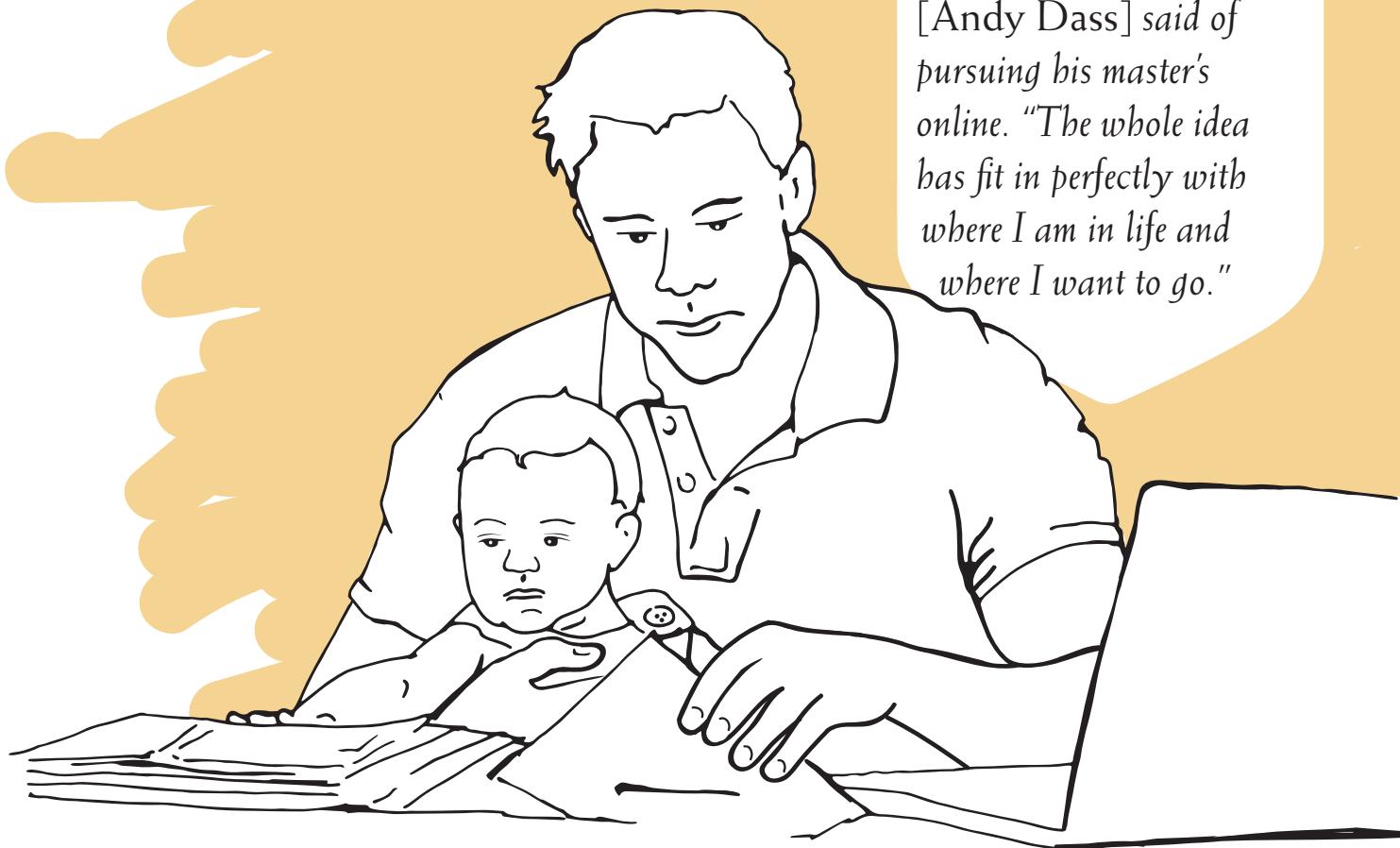
million dollars this year. The Foundation continues to manage and invest monies carefully and serve as good stewards of your money. The gifts you give today will have great impact for many years. I encourage you to keep your records updated with our office so that you can receive newsworthy information on the University of North Alabama: [www.una.edu/alumni/alumni-update-form](http://www.una.edu/alumni/alumni-update-form).



Roar Lions!  
**Debbie Shaw '82**  
Vice President for Advancement &  
Executive Director UNA Foundation



# UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS



It's not always easy for Andy Dass to pay attention in class.

The 33-year-old is the father of 6-month-old Bryn, and she's pretty much in charge of his schedule.

"It all kind of depends on what she allows me to do," Dass said with a laugh. "There are times when she's sitting next to me, and I'm looking at a problem and handing her toys to play with."

This isn't happening in Room 5 of the Mathematics Building. This is taking place at Dass' home near Rochester, Minnesota, where he is pursuing his master's degree in mathematics from the University of North Alabama online.

Dass has never been to Florence – in fact, he's never set foot in Alabama. That makes him a prime example of the type of student UNA is recruiting these days. Traditional students taking classes on campus are still the university's bread-and-butter, but more and more, UNA is

creating degrees and creating partnerships, all in an effort to become what some are referring to as a "university without walls."

That effort takes many forms, including more online classes and academic tracks, more experiential learning that takes students off-campus and into the professional world, and more cross-collaboration among UNA's colleges.

"We will always be a campus that serves the needs of our traditional college-aged students, and we do that well," says Ross C. Alexander, vice president for Academic Affairs and provost at UNA. "But UNA is maturing and evolving and has momentum to redefine its mission. We're also becoming the first-choice university for all sorts of different types of learners. Those students are almost exclusively in online programs, so a big part of this notion of a university without walls is one that serves learners across the region and state and country with high-quality programs."

*"It has been really fun and challenging but doable," [Andy Dass] said of pursuing his master's online. "The whole idea has fit in perfectly with where I am in life and where I want to go."*



*"We're the lowest-funded institution in this state by a mile, so we have to grow to thrive and grow to survive."*

— Dr. Ross Alexander,  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Provost

## FINANCIAL IMPETUS

There's a reason this type of initiative is critical to UNA — money.

"We're the lowest-funded institution in this state by a mile, so we have to grow to thrive and grow to survive," Alexander said. "And that means engaging new constituencies and types of learners with high-quality programs. And that means expanding our footprint and our scope. It didn't just happen organically or by happenstance—it is part of a very shrewd strategy that involved a lot of people."

That strategy pervades UNA's 2019-2024 strategic plan, which includes elements of a "university without walls" throughout its mission statement, whether it's increasing internships and education abroad as part of the "Transformational Student Experience," increasing technology integration as part

of "Academic Excellence and Innovation," becoming a leader for diversity and inclusion, or developing an institutional identity "locally, regionally and globally."

That's the vision of President Kenneth D. Kitts, who came on board in 2015, as well as Alexander, who joined him as provost in 2017.

## ONLINE

"I was tasked with really fleshing out and making more sophisticated our online identity," Alexander said. "We had a good foundation in place, and UNA is a very progressive, entrepreneurial, innovative type of place, so there was a good critical mass of faculty and staff and administrators who understood very well the need to expand our mission and our scope."

All of UNA's colleges are expanding their online offerings.

"We're trying to meet the demand that the students are telling us they have — people want to have families, are trying to work, all the while trying to further their education," said Katherine Kinney,

interim dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences. "We have to work within what students' needs are. I know in my college, that's where we are."

That means programs like a new master's degree in sports management coming this fall. That online program joins others that are already in place in the college.

"The growth of our online programs has been significant," Kinney said. "We have worked really hard to form partnerships with school districts to provide incentives for teachers to come back and pursue degrees."

The College of Business has offered an online MBA since 2004, and it's one of UNA's great successes — the *Birmingham Business Journal* recently named UNA's MBA program the largest in the state.

"The online program has more than doubled in the past four years," said Gregory A. Carnes, dean of UNA's College of Business. "In terms of teaching working professionals through graduate programs, it's a strong emphasis for us, and we've had good success."

In the fall of 2018, the College of Business started a master's degree in accountancy program online, and a business administration bachelor's completion program has been available online for nearly two years. "It's designed for the more nontraditional student who was never able to finish their degree," Carnes said.

Dean Carmen Burkhalter said the College of Arts and Sciences has also been offering online courses for a number of years, but that "the expansion of online has really exploded" with Alexander as provost.

"There's just so much data out there to show that unless you're going to work on a Ph.D. now there are few students who actually want to incur the expense of moving to a location and having a graduate degree experience," she says. "You've got to get at them online."

That's exactly what drew Dass to UNA. After graduating from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, he taught for eight years in Minneapolis public schools before starting his own tutoring business. A couple of years ago, he decided to go back to school to get his master's degree.

"I was only looking into online options," said Dass, whose wife is a nurse and works at night. "The program I'm interested in, there's only the University of Minnesota option in my area without having to move somewhere and that wasn't an option, since going there during the day wouldn't allow me to stay home. . . I found UNA. The price was great, and they offered exactly what I was looking for."

So in January Dass began taking online classes, working toward a degree tailored toward community college teaching, which is what Dass would like to do.

"It has been super fun," he said of his online experience. "It's a little different in that you're not attending a class, of course, so everything's kind of at your own speed. It's also up to you how much you interact with your classmates, and I've been doing a lot of emailing back and forth with them. I can't say I feel a part of the campus, which I've never seen, but I definitely feel like a part of this program."

## LEARNING AGREEMENTS

As a part of and in addition to the online push, UNA is also seeking more learning agreements with workplaces in the region, Alexander said.

"We have forged a number of learning agreements for educational partnerships whereby UNA is an educational provider for large employers and their existing workforce," he said. "We are partnering with large employers so their employees can either finish a baccalaureate degree or earn a master's degree as career advancement or professional development or what have you."

Several of those partners are in the healthcare industry, including Huntsville Hospital, North Alabama Medical Center, and North Mississippi Health Services.

"The number one impediment to a nurse with an associate degree earning a baccalaureate degree is cost, so we

are creating a pathway for associate-prepared nurses to earn a baccalaureate degree," said Alexander, who said UNA has also partnered with the Alabama Community College system. "We have created a pathway for every graduate from every community college in Alabama who graduated with an associate degree in science and nursing to earn a baccalaureate degree at UNA. Whether they graduated last year, they're current students, or graduated 10 years ago, if they have an associate degree from an Alabama community college, there is a pathway for them here at a discounted rate."

Similar programs are under way in the business community, said Alexander, who said UNA is about to finalize an agreement with the aerospace and defense contractor Dynetics, which is based in Huntsville. Already in place is





*"When someone graduates with a baccalaureate degree from UNA, we want them to be workforce-ready. We want them to have had experiences working with people from other cultures, people at all sorts of organizations.*

— Dr. Ross Alexander

an agreement with Manufacture Alabama, which essentially forges a learning agreement with all its members, which include 3M and Mercedes-Benz.

"There are more than three dozen members, and our agreement applies to tens of thousands of their employees, where they can earn an online UNA degree at a very attractive rate," Alexander said. "All of this not only provides pathways to degree completion and educational obtainment for working adults throughout the state, it also tremendously expands the brand of UNA across the state and region."

#### **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

A third way UNA is breaking down traditional education walls – in addition to online offerings and learning agreements with businesses – is experiential learning, or getting students outside of the classroom. It's the first goal of the new strategic plan, to "increase experiential learning opportunities for students."

"Quite simply, we want well-rounded graduates," Alexander said. "When someone graduates with a baccalaureate degree from UNA, we want them to be workforce-ready. We want them to



"For example, last year we doubled the education abroad scholarship for students traveling to other nations, and we saw a 125 percent increase in the number of students studying abroad. That's no coincidence."

In the College of Arts and Sciences, a goal is for all departments to have experiential learning requirements for their students, "anything from study abroad to practicum to research projects," Burkhalter said. "Anything that gets them out of the classroom."

The College of Education and Human Sciences already has "a rich foundation" of students doing internships in schools. "But we're building on it even more," Kinney said. "It's much more of an institutional priority now."

In the College of Business, about 50 students each semester participate in the Generator, an innovation incubator for entrepreneurs. "Some students there have started their own businesses," Carnes said.

UNA business students work with businesses in the region in a couple of other ways. One is projects-oriented classes that have teams of students working with area businesses. Another is through the college's Innovation Fellows, students who receive a \$2,500 stipend to work with an organization on a project that might not get funded otherwise. That's provided through the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, run by Doug Barrett.

have had experiences working with people from other cultures, people at all sorts of organizations. Maybe they've had a couple of education abroad experiences in other countries, or maybe they've done a couple of internships, or maybe they've shadowed employees at businesses. This portfolio of experiences gives them real-world, cross-cultural experience while in college."

Much of this has been going on for years at UNA, but it hasn't been an organized strategy, with proper resources and funding, Alexander said.

"We are now prioritizing these types of experiences for our students," he said.

"Our degrees have a natural synergy with the business community," Carnes said. "When we hire faculty, we advertise that we're interested in faculty interested in using their knowledge in ways that can benefit the professional business community – we call ourselves an applied business school."

## ONLY THE BEGINNING

What is happening now at UNA is only the beginning, Alexander said.

"We must grow every single year to survive and thrive as an institution," he said. "Our state funding is only about a quarter of our budget, so we are responsible for our own success. We have to grow in ways that have marketability, that are attractive to learners, that engage learners outside of our traditional service region, to pay for all the things we want to do on our traditional campus. We are recruiting and retaining top-notch students, and we want them to have just as many opportunities outside of the classroom as we do inside the classroom."

Dass, for one, is sold on the idea.

"It has been really fun and challenging but doable," he said of pursuing his master's online. "The whole idea has fit in perfectly with where I am in life and where I want to go."



## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the University of North Alabama is to be:  
*Innovative. Inclusive. Engaged. Evolving. Global.*

2019 - 2024

# “Roaring with Excellence” STRATEGIC PLAN

How does the oldest university in Alabama continue to evolve and improve? By ensuring its new strategic plan does not just sit on a shelf and collect dust, but instead serves as a catalyst to allow the university to continue to be *innovative, inclusive, engaged, evolving, and global*, which happens to be the University of North Alabama’s newly crafted mission statement.

Rich with heritage and history, UNA has a distinct charm that is reflective of the creativity and soul that runs through The Shoals. And it’s time for people to take notice.

“We need to work toward telling the UNA story. Too many times I’ve heard UNA being referred to as the ‘best kept secret in the state.’ It’s time for us to stand up and say ‘look at us, look at what we’re doing,’” said President Kitts.

In early March 2018, President Kitts charged a diverse and broadly-representative 21-member committee consisting of faculty, staff, students, and community members with crafting a strategic plan that reflects the culture and aspirations of the University, aligned with his vision and goals. The committee was co-chaired by Dr. Ross Alexander, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, and Dr. Tera Kirkman, Associate Dean

of the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. It was their task, along with the committee, to devise an actionable plan to guide University decision-making for the next five years.

“Our goal was to have a shared vision for the strategic plan,” Kirkman said. “We understand the importance of having a diverse perspective of how our constituents view UNA and the future of the University.”

By holding dozens of meetings with various faculty, staff, and stakeholder groups; collecting data from a survey with over 500 responses; speaking with a variety of students and alumni; meeting with the Board of Trustees and multiple leadership groups; and reaching out to the community, the committee devised five strategic themes that reflect the vision and goals of UNA and chart a course for the next five years or longer.

These themes include:

1. Transformational Student Experience
2. Academic Excellence and Innovation
3. Diversity and Inclusion
4. Financial Sustainability
5. Institutional Identity

# THEME ONE

## Transformational Student Experience



"The plan itself is short, sweet, and simple, and that's the way we wanted it," President Kitts said. "This is the base of our identity, and we ensure that we will continue to make headway toward these goals and themes. Our primary vision is to make broad progress on each with every passing year."

Theme one, **Transformational Student Experience**, focuses on increasing experiential learning opportunities for students in the form of internships, education abroad, study away, preceptorships, and simulations.

"We want our students to have substantive real world experiences as part of their academic program and journey," Alexander said. "We want all undergraduates upon graduation to have a portfolio of diverse experiences that will make them more

marketable in the workforce and empower them to become well-rounded students, graduates, and citizens."

By enhancing the student experience, the University serves as a portal to the world, diverse cultures and ideas, and the global marketplace. Transformational student experience is not limited to studying abroad or away but can also include undergraduate research with a faculty mentor or actively participating in a community engagement project. With an emphasis on scholarly impact, UNA is committed to the total development of each student to create a better learning experience. This goal aligns with the University's aspiration to have every baccalaureate graduate complete at least two experiential learning experiences while enrolled at UNA.

## THEME TWO

# Academic Excellence and Innovation



Theme two, **Academic Excellence and Innovation**, capitalizes upon UNA's tradition and culture of student achievement, curricular innovation, and cutting-edge programs. By promoting and supporting contemporary, student-centered academic practices at all levels and in all modalities, UNA hopes to craft and prepare students to enter the ever-changing job economy.

The further integration of technology is a significant component of the evolution of the University. Understanding and facilitating the shifting needs of students and employers, the University plans to significantly increase technology integration to benefit students in almost all academic programs and even co-curricular experiences.

"UNA is and desires to remain a leader in technology integration in the classroom," said Alexander. "There is really no academic program where we don't want to infuse more and better technology to improve the student experience and prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow."

# THEME THREE

## Diversity & Inclusion



All five of the strategic themes are integral and important to the success of the new Strategic Plan, but **Diversity and Inclusion**, theme three, represents the heart and culture of UNA.

"Diversity is an essential part of our institutional message and identity," said President Kitts.

UNA strives to be an inclusive learning and social environment for students of all types, beliefs, and backgrounds. The institutional legacy and tradition is one of open-mindedness, cooperation, and the celebration of diverse points of view and perspectives.

"We prepare our students to walk across the stage and get their degree and to go out and set the world on fire," President Kitts said. "However, that world they are walking into in 2019 is very different from the one our grandparents experienced. It is a

world of great diversity and multiculturalism that is going to be a part of people's lives and careers. If we can't offer an educational experience that reflects that of the real world, we're not serving our students well."

Dr. Tera Kirkman agrees. "While it is increasingly important to expand experiential learning opportunities for students, it is also crucial that UNA continues to build a culture that is accepting of the diverse perspectives on campus," Kirkman said. To further implement these perspectives, the University aspires to model their commitment to diversity through their hiring faculty and student recruitment practices as well as developing a Center for Social Inclusion to serve as a campus and community hub for diversity and inclusion.

President Kitts said that he is already very proud of what UNA has accomplished in international student recruitment with about 400 international students out of approximately

# THEME FOUR

## Financial Sustainability



6,000 undergraduates. In fact, the Fall 2018 semester saw a 65% increase in the number of new international students at UNA, with a 32% decrease nationwide.

"We want all of our students to have opportunities to travel overseas, but we also understand how that may not be realistic for everyone with varying circumstances," President Kits said. "So if we can't take them out into the world, we can bring the world to them by creating an environment that is diverse and real."

The University has already created a global learning center where international and domestic students can stay together on campus to experience living with people from different cultures. In addition, UNA plans to develop and implement a co-curricular program focused primarily on diversity and inclusion.

Theme four, **Financial Sustainability**, involves diversifying and pursuing public and private funding strategies to support

the University as well as its students. With new and ongoing plans to engage policymakers, alumni, stakeholders, and supporters to increase the financial support of the University—best exemplified by President Kits' "Project 208"—UNA is committed to the financial health of the campus for subsequent generations of students.

To that end UNA aspires to reduce deferred maintenance and immediate capital needs by 25% to better support students and expand opportunities for them by putting that money where it is most beneficial. Over the next five years, the University will identify key performance indicators and tactical goals to measure their progress. However, implementing a program review cycle will involve the collective efforts of every major constituent group across the University, to ensure efficiency and translate these goals and aspirations into reality.

# THEME FIVE

## Institutional Identity



**Institutional Identity**, the final theme, pursues a cohesive and shared University vision focused on student learning and engagement—locally, regionally, and globally.

The University's goal is to develop prominent academic programs with national and international recognition at the graduate and undergraduate levels, in all modalities (traditional and online) including the launch of the first two doctoral programs in Fall 2020.

UNA is committing to achieving a balance or "sweet spot" with regard to its size and balance of graduate and undergraduate and traditional and online programs. "Part of the allure of our campus is that we are on the smaller side, and we have this gorgeous historic campus that is distinctive. It makes UNA, UNA," President Kitts said.

The University's ideal location and rich history are assets for the future growth and evolution of the campus. "We try to make sure that we are representing not only Florence but the Shoals and we are very conscious of that," President Kitts said. "We are a regional university representing our neighboring towns and counties, and that is very much part of our identity."

The Shoals boasts a strong tradition and rich heritage of creativity as it is the home to so many accomplished musicians, artists, and writers. Creativity is deeply interwoven within the culture of the Shoals and by extension, UNA. "We want to be a source of opportunity, innovation and creativity," President Kitts said. "Thinking about the world differently and having an open mind to a variety of perspectives is what people are known best for here—it's just in our DNA."

## *Fall Commencement Features UNA Alumnus* **DR. JIMMY SHAW**

**Dr. Jimmy Shaw** has 18 years of experience in the field of education and was the featured commencement speaker at the University's fall graduation ceremonies. He has served as a classroom teacher, assistant principal of a high school, Director of Federal Programs, Director of Instruction and Assessment, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and he currently serves the Florence City Schools System as superintendent. Dr. Shaw has been in administration for 12 years. He is a graduate of Florence City Schools (Bradshaw Class of 1992), and has an associate's degree from Northwest-Shoals Community College. He holds bachelor's, master's, and Education Specialist degrees all from the University of North Alabama, and a Doctorate of Education degree from Samford University. He has been married to wife Felicia for 20 years, and he has three sons. He is a member of the Florence Rotary Club, Class XXIX of Leadership Alabama, and the Kappa Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated.



## University of NORTH ALABAMA **CROWNS Another MISS UNA**



Keely Templeton is a nursing major at the University of North Alabama. Keely was crowned Miss UNA on January 26th, 2019 and will represent the University of North Alabama for the year.

In June, Keely will compete for the title of Miss Alabama. There she will be judged based on a private interview, a social impact statement, an on-stage question, and her talent.

Keely is from Danville. She is a member of the University LaGrange Society as well as Alpha Gamma Delta. She is also a member of various honor societies.

Each Miss UNA chooses a special cause or platform to serve during her reign as Miss UNA. This year, Keely's platform is Step Up with Keely and Give Soles4Soles. She partners with this international organization to collect new and gently used shoes for individuals without shoes.



Second Runner-up: Maggie Freeman; Miss UNA Keely Templeton; First Runner-up: Cameron Hunt; and Third Runner-up: Margo King



CultureFest

# UNA RENEWS ITS FOCUS ON STRATEGIC DIVERSITY PLAN WITH INCOMING TASK FORCE, NEW EFFORTS

Since 2008 when the University of North Alabama first drafted its Strategic Diversity Plan, a conscious effort not only to celebrate diversity in all its forms but to also foster an understanding and appreciation of diversity was born.

In the 11 years since a task force was created to work toward that mission, the University has launched several programs to enrich diversity among faculty and students, and is now looking to forge ahead at an even greater speed.

Since January under the direction of President Dr. Ken Kitts, the University has been working to assemble a new task force aimed at creating an updated, more comprehensive Strategic Diversity Plan, as well as a five-year roadmap to accomplish it, and benchmarks to measure successes and failures.

"We're not where we want to be, but we are making great strides," said Ron K. Patterson, who oversees the Office of Diversity and Institutional Equity (ODIE) in his role as Assistant to the President for Diversity. "The university has done a great job of

increasing and enhancing programming on campus, and we've done a great job in terms of our hiring process, being more inclusive of hiring across all ethnic backgrounds. Ultimately what it comes down to is providing the appropriate programming on campus that allows our students to develop so that they can become great citizens in the global market."

And, said Patterson, who also serves as UNA Chief Enrollment Officer, a key piece of creating those well-rounded, conscious students is involving the community in diversity efforts.

All of it, leaders hope, will be presented to the UNA Board of Trustees in the form of a new Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan at the board's scheduled meeting on Sept. 20.

Until then, as the task force is being assembled with leaders from within and outside the university, UNA has continued to move forward on plans including developing an African American Black Studies program and hosting events like the Women's Interfaith Panel, which took place in March.



Martin Luther King Jr. Day

## Creating a More Diverse Learning Environment

Since the beginning, when the initial Strategic Diversity Plan was introduced in 2008, reaching current and prospective faculty as well as the student body with a message of understanding and inclusion was truly at the heart of the mission.

Creating ODIE, which has been led by Director Joan Williams since 2013, was the first step. From there, diversity and training education began to roll out to faculty, and new programs like the President's Minority Faculty Fellowship Program were created to meet the challenge on all sides.

The fellowship is focused on creating full-time instructor and lecturer positions for ABD-level doctoral students or recent doctoral graduates at UNA. Candidates, ideally, bring varied human characteristics, backgrounds, interests, and points of view to the university community.

Through an application process that may also take into account diversity of thought, geographic diversity, or other factors, the fellowship seeks to draw applicants historically underrepresented in academia.



BSA Black History Gala

Closer attention has also been paid to where and when specific openings are posted and to the recruitment process as a whole. "Our goal is to be more strategic and intentional with our job postings and recruiting efforts," Patterson said.

For all hires, diversity and inclusion training is required and content is readily available for current faculty on everything from creating inclusive classrooms to ADA requirements and LGBTQ resources.

## Fostering Diversity and Inclusion Among Students

Student efforts have gained ground for the past six years under the leadership of Williams.

ODIE events include the annual CultureFest, which takes place in the fall, and Diversity Education Week, which incorporates a two-day Tunnel of Oppression highlighting racism, sexism, homophobia, and oppression against those with disabilities. The event is traditionally held the first week of April.

ODIE programming seeks not only to reach students with a message of diversity and inclusion – the whats and hows – but to mobilize them to spread the message to their peers.

The Diversity Peer Education Program does just that by helping to introduce the topic of diversity and inclusion to students, as well as teach ways to recognize and deal appropriately with stereotypes and microaggressions, communicate inclusively, and foster a culture of understanding.

Launched in fall 2017, the program also offers Diversity 101: More than Black and White as an optional, 50-minute education course for students. In its first six weeks nearly two years ago, over 400 students took the class with 99% of evaluations recommending all students receive the training, according to ODIE.

Patterson said UNA also welcomed Jeremy Martin, M.Ed., over a year ago as director of Disability Support Services. In addition to working with ODIE, the department provides support and accommodations for students with learning, physical, and psychological disabilities.



CultureFest



CultureFest

"These events and programs allow people to have difficult conversations, conversations about things that may challenge their upbringing," Patterson said. "From my perspective, I feel they have been received well. I'm sure there are individuals who think differently, but again our goal is to develop our students so that they can become great citizens in the global market. Addressing all of these issues is critical to that."

Other ODIE programs include the Diversity Student Ambassador Program (DSA), which hosts diversity-themed activities on campus and facilitates student discussions, and the annual CultureFest scheduled for the fall. The event, which features diverse music and food, serves as an introduction and welcome to new and returning students.

Incoming freshmen at UNA are also on track to receiving – at no charge to them – one book provided by ODIE to introduce them to the topic of diversity and inclusion. Even the book selection itself was based on a campus vote.

All of these efforts have not only helped contribute to greater success in recruiting students across ethnic categories (with 13.5% African Americans, the school is outpacing Lauderdale County in projected growth) – they have also generated recognition on a national scale.

In November, Williams was recognized by the Alabama Association of Higher Education Diversity Officers (ALAHEDO) as the 2018 recipient of the ALAHEDO Louis

Dale Diversity Leadership Award for outstanding contributions to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

In years prior (2016 and 2017), the University as a whole was also recognized as an "Institution Committed to Diversity" by Minority Access Incorporated.

## Creating Champions of Diversity in the Community

According to the department's mission, all of its efforts go back to "understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual."

For Patterson, this doesn't simply mean people within UNAs community – it requires buy-in and participation from the community at large – in this case, the City of Florence.

"Diversity and inclusion is an all-encompassing topic. Some of the issues that our college is facing are not unique to UNA, and some of the issues and challenges we're facing nationally also impact us on campus," he said. "As we move forward, it's critical that we include the voice of our community as a whole. Any progress we make must include the community."

It's a task Mayor Steve Holt of Florence, Ala., welcomes wholeheartedly.

"The City of Florence applauds and supports the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force of the University of North Alabama," Holt said. "Embracing a culture which accepts and celebrates diversity is vital to the progress of the Shoals community. We are excited to be part of this effort."

The incoming task force challenged with creating the new, comprehensive Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan will include members of the community who have a heart and desire to partner with UNA in fostering a healthy, diverse community.

"Our hope is to establish and strengthen partnerships within our community among individuals, organizations and businesses," Patterson said. "We want to continue to enrich and provide programming for students and faculty, as well as the community at large."



Diversity Week



CultureFest



CultureFest

## A Renewed Commitment

Under the leadership of Kitts, the University has renewed its commitment to improving diversity and fostering inclusion, most notably by moving ODIE under the enrollment management funding umbrella, Patterson said. The move has afforded the department greater resources and allowed greater access to the administration.

Creation of the new task force and a commitment to creating a new Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan also demonstrates a vow to facilitate an environment open to all races, cultures, sexual orientations, abilities, religions, and genders.

Even seemingly smaller moves, such as continuing selection of two members of the faculty or student bodies for their achievements in the areas of diversity and inclusion for the

upcoming 2019 President's Diversity Award, are a nod to the administration's commitment.

Awardees, announced at the Annual Campus Awards Gala, will receive \$500 in development grant money in recognition of projects and practices that best reflect the implementation of campus diversity goals.

It's not enough to simply participate in diversity and inclusion efforts: UNA wants to develop a passion and understanding that transcends all lines, Patterson said.

"Ultimately, we want our campus to be a reflection of the global world we live in, to be honest," he said. "We want the ideals of acceptance and respect to bleed over to our student body, and to our faculty and staff. And we want those ideals to reach our community as well."



Sankofa African American Traveling Museum



Diversity Week



Leonard "Rabbit" Thomas and Bobby Joe Pride

## UNA REUNION TO MARK 50 YEARS OF INTEGRATION OF COLLEGIATE FOOTBALL IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA

On September 21, 1968, the University of North Alabama, then known as Florence State University, became the first predominantly white college in the state of Alabama to play an African American player in a collegiate football game.

Next Saturday, November 3, the school will honor the 50th Anniversary of the integration of collegiate football in the state of Alabama and at UNA with a reunion of the Lions' 1968 squad during a pre-game ceremony of North Alabama's game against Shorter. Kickoff for the game is set for 1:30 p.m. with the pre-game ceremony at 1:10.

Recruited by head coach Hal Self, freshmen Leonard "Rabbit" Thomas of Huntsville, Ala., and Bobby Joe Pride of Decatur, Ala., played in

the Lions' season-opening game against Central Arkansas on September 21, 1968, breaking the color barrier in the state. The duo not only played in every game that season but both went on to distinguished careers as four-year lettermen for the Lions.

When they completed their eligibility with the Lions in 1971, Thomas ranked as the school's all-time leading rusher and he and Pride ranked one and two, respectively, in career all-purpose yards. Thomas rushed for 2,271 yards and 21 touchdowns in his career and had 3,938 all-purpose yards. Pride had more than 2,000 career return yards at the school and finished with 3,655 all-purpose yards.



Thomas was inducted into the UNA Athletic Hall of Fame in 1996 in the seventh class of inductees.

Numerous members of the Lions' 1968 team are confirmed to attend the reunion, including both Thomas and Pride.

Five years before the integration of the Lions' football program, Wendell Wilkie Gunn became the first African American student to enroll at UNA (then Florence State College) on Sept. 11, 1963. On March 1 of this year, The University Commons at UNA was named the Wendell W. Gunn University Commons in his honor.

As far as other predominantly white institutions in the state of Alabama, West Alabama, Jacksonville State and Samford played their first African American football players in 1969. Auburn followed in 1970, Alabama and Troy in 1971. Alabama had five African American students walk-on on its football team in the spring of 1967 but none of them played in a game.

Kentucky was the first Southeastern Conference football program to integrate with Nat Northington playing in his first game in September of 1967. Tennessee followed in 1968 and the remaining schools between 1970 and 1972.

Another African American, Gene Stovall, was also a member of the 1968 UNA football team but did not participate in a game. He had transferred to the school from Calhoun Community College. He is now deceased.

## FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN PLAYER TO COMPETE IN A GAME

School	Player	First Game Played
North Alabama	Leonard Thomas	1968
	Bobby Joe Pride	1968
West Alabama	Horace Minor	1969
Jacksonville State		1969
Samford		1969
Auburn	James Owens	1970
Alabama	John Mitchell	1971
	Wilbur Jackson	1971
Troy	Cliff Dunham	1971



1968 Lions



## ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTS

### HILL, LIDDY, MCKAY AND WILMER AS CLASS OF 2018

The University of North Alabama Athletic Hall of Fame added its twenty-ninth class of inductees last fall with a group that included football standout Jerry Hill, softball All-American Jessica Liddy Wallace, two-time cross country All-American Emry McKay Bryan, and a starter on UNA's 1991 NCAA Division II National Championship Basketball team Carl Wilmer.

The group were formally inducted into the UNA Athletic Hall of Fame as part of UNA's 2018 Homecoming celebration.

Following its creation in 1990, the UNA Athletic Hall of Fame inducted four members each year through 2005. From 2006-2014 that number was expanded to six. Beginning in 2015 the induction class returned to four honorees per year. The 2018 inductions brought the total number of inductees into the UNA Athletic Hall of Fame to 134.

#### JERRY HILL

(Football 1977-'80)

The current principal at Brooks High School in Killen, Jerry Hill was a four-year football letterman as a receiver for the Lions from 1977-80. He was on the receiving end of one of the most famous passes in UNA history when he pulled in a pass from Fred Riley and went 87

yards for a touchdown on November 22, 1980, to give the Lions a 35-28 win on the road over Jacksonville State and earn the school its first Gulf South Conference football championship.

Hill was selected as a permanent team captain on that 1980 team that not only won the school's first GSC football title but also made UNA's first trip to the NCAA Division II Playoffs. An All-Gulf South Conference selection following the 1980 season, he was drafted in the 11th round of the 1981 NFL draft by the Washington Redskins.

Hill had two 100-yard receiving games with 129 on nine catches and one TD against Troy State in 1980 and 187 yards on five catches and one TD against Jacksonville State in 1980. Playing on primarily running teams, he was UNA's top receiver in 1978 with 11 catches for 189 yards and three TDs and 1980 with 31 catches for 603 yards and two TDs.

Hill was selected as a member of the UNA All-Decade Team for 1979-88.

Hill had a long tenure as a high school football coach and coached in the North-South All-Star game in 2006. In 2007 he received the AHSAA Distinguished Service Award at the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game. He and his wife, Beth, have a son, Austin, and a granddaughter, Ila Kate.

#### JESSICA LIDDY WALLACE

(Softball 2004-'07)

A Jupiter, Florida, native, Jessica Liddy Wallace was a four-year starter on UNA softball teams from 2004-07.

As a junior she became the program's first All-American in softball, being named to the second-team of the Louisville Slugger/NFCA All-America team. She helped lead that 2006 team to a 40-20 record and to the first NCAA Division II Playoff appearance in UNA softball history.

A four-time All-Gulf South Conference selection with first-team selections in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and a second-team nod in 2007, she is one of just 16 student-athletes in school history to be selected All-GSC four straight years.

Liddy set school career records for most games played (219), most games started (219), most at bats (675), most hits (225), most runs batted in (169), most doubles (52) and most home runs (31). She finished with a .333 career batting average (225 of 675) and had 88 career extra-base hits. She set single season records for most runs batted in (52 in 2006), most doubles (17 in 2006) and most home runs (15 in 2005).

An All-South Region selection in 2005, 2006, and 2007, she earned one

GSC Player of the Week honor for Feb. 27, 2007.

Liddy led the Lions in runs batted in four straight seasons and in home runs three times.

She holds two degrees from UNA with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in 2007 and a Masters of Arts in Education in 2013.

Currently employed as a teacher at Weeden Elementary School, Liddy has served 10 years in the Florence City School System. She worked eight years at Forest Hills elementary and also coached both softball and volleyball at Florence High School for four years.

Liddy was named Weeden Elementary and Florence City Schools Elementary Teacher of the Year and also created a shoe program for students at Weeden that resulted in more than 400 pair of shoes being donated last year.

She also represents District 7 on the Board of Directors for the Alabama State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (ASAHPERD).

Liddy is married to Bret Wallace and they have a four-year-old son, Luke.

#### **EMRY MCKAY BRYAN**

(Cross Country 2004-'06)

A Huntsville native, Emry McKay Bryan was a three-year runner for the UNA women's cross country team from 2004-'06 and competed in the NCAA Division II National Championships three times as an individual. Her finishes of 29th in 2004, 17th in 2005 and 21st in 2006 earned her All-American honors twice.

McKay earned first-team All-Gulf South Conference honors all three seasons and was a two-time Academic All-GSC selection as well.

A three-time All-South Region honoree as well, McKay was the 2006 South Region individual champion.

The only female student-athlete at UNA to be selected three times as the



Jerry Hill '80



Jessica Liddy Wallace '07



Emry McKay Bryan '06



Cal Wilmer '91

school's Female Athlete of the Year (2005-'07), she graduated from UNA in 2007 with a nursing degree.

Currently employed as a nurse in the Madison City Schools System, McKay worked nine years in Labor and Delivery at Huntsville Hospital.

She is married to former UNA golfer Samuel Bryan and they have a daughter, Warren Kathleen.

#### **CARL WILMER**

(Basketball 1990-'91)

A native of Marksville, Louisiana, Carl Wilmer was a two-year letterman in basketball for the Lions in 1990-'91 and was a key figure in helping lead the Lions to the NCAA Division II National Championship in 1991.

Selected to the All-Gulf South Conference team and to the NCAA Championship All-Tournament team in 1990-'91, Wilmer averaged 15.3 points per game on a team that went 29-4. He had the highest field goal percentage

on the team (57.4) and was second in scoring. He also scored 33 points in a game, twice.

He was also a member of the season 500-point club with 505 in 1991. He played in 43 career games and averaged 14.4 points and 6.7 rebounds. Wilmer shot 56.4 percent from the floor for his career (219-388) and 66.6 percent from the free throw line (160-240), and he pulled 289 career rebounds for a 6.7 average.

Wilmer studied criminal justice at UNA and is currently employed at Hexion Specialty Chemicals in Louisiana. He formerly served as executive casino host at Paragon Casino Resort. He also has had a lengthy career as a youth and high school basketball coach.

His son Carl Wilmer, Jr., plays football at Grambling State University and his daughter Roslyn Wilmer played basketball at Louisiana College and is currently a high school women's basketball coach in Louisiana.



# STEPPING UP

## Highlights of UNA's first year in Division I



The University of North Alabama opened a new era in 2018-19 as the Lions began competing as an NCAA Division I institution for the first time as members of the Big South Conference in football and the ASUN Conference in its other 13 sports. The first nine months of Division I competition for UNA has produced numerous milestone events and historic wins that have the Lions confident in the move and optimistic about their future at the top level of NCAA athletics.

The UNA football team traveled more than 1,700 miles to open its first season in Division I Football

Championship Subdivision (FCS) play and posted a dramatic, come-from-behind 34-30 win over Southern Utah. The Lions went on to post a 7-3 record that included a win over in-state rival Alabama A&M.

In the fall of 2018, UNA officially began competing in women's golf for the first time in school history. The Lions played in three fall events and four in the spring, culminating in the ASUN Conference Tournament.

Beach volleyball is now an intercollegiate sport at UNA with the Lions playing their first matches in February. UNA also now has a three court

complex for beach volleyball at Cox Creek Park and the Lions hosted their first home matches in March.

North Alabama's first official competition as a Division I program came on August 17 when the women's soccer team hosted and defeated Alabama State 5-1 at the Bill Jones Athletic Complex. The Lions opened their season with five straight wins and closed the year by winning two matches in the ASUN Conference Tournament and advancing to the finals.

Perhaps the most impressive of all of UNA's Division I firsts was the school's



first win in women's basketball. On November 6, 2018, the Lions traveled to Nashville and knocked off SEC member Vanderbilt 74-71 in Memorial Gymnasium in the Lions' first Division I women's basketball game. The UNA women went on to post their second straight 20-plus win season, hosted a first round game in the ASUN Conference Tournament and advanced to play in the Women's Basketball Invitational (WBI).





The UNA men's basketball team didn't ease into its first season in Division I. The Lions took on one of the hardest schedules possible, facing three teams (Gonzaga, Saint Louis, Liberty) that went on to play in the NCAA Tournament and three (UNC Greensboro, Toledo, Lipscomb) that played in the NIT. The Lions even traveled the farthest distance in school history for a basketball game, going to Spokane, Wash., to take on Gonzaga at the historic McCarthey Athletic Center.

The UNA men's golf program, traditionally one of the school's most consistent and competitive on a national level, picked up its first win of the Division I era in March when the Lions bested a field of 12 Division I institutions at the UNA Spring Classic at Turtle Point.

The North Alabama softball team opened its Division I era with an impressive 1-0 road win at UAB that helped propel the Lions to a 5-0 start in 2019.



# BOARD APPROVES RENAMING OF UNA SOFTBALL COMPLEX TO **HILDA B. ANDERSON STADIUM**

The University of North Alabama will be breaking ground this spring for renovations to the current Cox Creek Park and will rename the softball facility the Hilda B. Anderson Stadium later this year once renovations are complete.

A donation from the Anderson family will allow UNA to re-do the current ticket booth, entry way and plaza, and other projects at the facility.

A previous significant gift from the Andersons in 2016 allowed UNA to enhance the stadium's seating, hitting facility, and scoreboard, and to improve field conditions and drainage.

UNA softball coach Ashley Cozart said Mrs. Anderson's contributions have been critical to the growth of the UNA program.

"Mrs. Anderson is one of the most humble and genuine people I have ever met," Cozart said. "She has been instrumental in our success as a program and has provided our team with funds to help make our complex the best it can be. It is an honor to have our stadium named after Mrs. Hilda Anderson because of who she is and the life she lives every day. She represents what we want our players to be: strong female athletes who are champions in the community, in the classroom, and on the field. Every person who enters through those gates will see the impact she has had not only on us, but also on young aspiring females who want to be successful in anything they strive to do. We are thankful for her and know that these wonderful improvements would not be possible without her."

## UNIVERSITY DEDICATES THE **STEVE and SHEILA PIERCE HOSPITALITY SUITE** AT FLOWERS HALL



The University of North Alabama dedicated the Steve and Sheila Pierce Hospitality Suite at Flowers Hall on February 9 during the Lions' home basketball double-header against North Florida.

The suite, a focal point of Flowers Hall's major renovations over the last year, was made possible by a donation from the Pierces, long-time supporters of UNA and its athletics program. The area will be used as a hospitality room at home athletic events, as a study area during the week, a meeting room for the

athletic department, and as an area to host other conference or university receptions.

North Alabama President Dr. Ken Kitts and Athletic Director Mark Linder spoke at the dedication ceremony and presented the Pierce family with a plaque in their honor.

The Pierces were joined at the ceremony by their children and grandchildren.

A 1975 North Alabama graduate, Steve Pierce is a long-time member of the UNA Board of Trustees.



**FORMER PLAYERS  
IN ATTENDANCE WERE:**

Kaseama Ashbourne  
Sarah Bailey  
Wanda Beckham Ross  
Lisa Biley Berry  
Gloria Bush Walker  
Cindi Carr Markham  
Renae Cody  
LaConger Cohran Shelton  
Sharman Coley  
Shelia Daniel  
Amber Deline  
Darlene Eddy Hayes  
Starr Ferguson Jones  
Nichelle Filmore  
Cynthia Forsythe  
Vanessa Groves Davis  
Laura Hamlin Clark  
Cathy Hammond  
Tonya Hester Bogle  
Jasmine Horne  
Jana Killen  
Lauren Faris Long  
Janae Lyde  
Becky Mauck Gentry  
Brenda Mayes  
Tracy McCall Gholston  
Marcy McMillin Bryant  
Glannda Mills Long  
Carrie Myers Sanders  
Julia Myers  
LaConger Pegues Jackson  
Andrea Rickard  
Jessi Smith  
Jessica Strucher Freeman  
Jennifer Thompson



**UNA CELEBRATES  
50 YEARS OF  
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
WITH REUNION**



The University of North Alabama women's basketball program celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a reunion of its former players and coaches at the Lions' February 16 home game against Liberty Hall.

Forty of the program's more than 250 former players returned for the event, including nine who have previously been inducted into UNA's Athletic Hall of Fame.

Former women's head coaches Gary Elliott and Wayne Byrd were also in attendance.

The UNA women's basketball program began in 1969 as part of the physical education program and competed as extramurals. In 1976, women's basketball moved under the athletic department and the sport

became part of NCAA competition in 1981-82.

The players gathered for a pre-game luncheon and were recognized on court at halftime of the game.

Included in the returning players was Jennifer Thompson, who was the team's leading scorer during the program's first two seasons under collegiate athletics in 1976 and 1977.

UNA Athletic Hall of Fame members included in the reunion were Elliott and Byrd, as well as former UNA players Wanda Beckham, LaConger Cohran, Amber Deline, Becky Mauck, Brenda Mayes and Tracy McCall.



Posing in front of the photo from the 1983-84 media guide cover are the same folks! Renae Cody, Gloria Bush Walker, Wayne Byrd, Glenada Mills Long.



Tracy McCall Gholston signs a bench removed in the Flowers Hall renovations. All of the former players signed the benches that will be displayed in the UNA locker room going forward.



Members of UNA's 1984-85 GSC Championship team in front of team photo: Wayne Byrd, Vanessa Groves Davis, Jana Killen, LaConger Cohran Shelton, Renae Cody, Brenda Mayes, Sharman Coley.



Three members of UNA's 1994 Final Four Team: Starr Ferguson Jones, Lisa Biley Berry and March McMillin Bryant.



Several of the former players toured the updated UNA facilities including the women's basketball locker room.

## UNA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### OFFICERS

Derrick Chatman '08 President  
Tosha-Paige Whitten '13 President Elect  
Mary Leigh Gillespie '96 1st Vice-President  
Susan Adams '80 2nd Vice-President  
Christa Raney '97 Secretary  
Raleigh Green '10 Treasurer  
Gale Satchel '06 Club Advisor  
Pat Roden '77 Faculty Advisor  
Aaron Irons '99 Past President  
Bishop Alexander '09 & '12 Alumni Director

### UNA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gloria Aday '70  
Andy Betterton '75  
Pat Burney '88  
Stephanie Coleman '82  
Ryan '01 & Lisa Clayton '00  
Michelle Eubanks '96  
Clayton Grider '08  
Jordan Graham '14  
Jan Hannah '89  
Melanie Harris '08, '10, & '17  
Will Hodges '10  
Cody Holder '10  
Jan Ingle '85  
Mike Holt '95  
Eric Kirkman '97 & '00  
Savannah Liles '11  
Justin McGill '12  
Anna Miskel '13  
Ana Fuller Pannell '06  
Rod Sheppard '98, 04, & '07  
Larry Softley '89 & '08  
Samuel Thigpen '11  
Denise Watts '77  
Chris Witten '10

### UNA ALUMNI CLUB LEADERS

#### ALABAMA

Birmingham • Chris Burrell '02  
Shoals Area • Elaine Witt '76  
Decatur/Morgan County • Zac '02 & Laura Richardson '03  
Huntsville • Laurentis Barnett '03  
Tuscaloosa • Jim Page '01

#### GEORGIA

Atlanta – Carnette Johnson '83

#### MISSISSIPPI

Central Mississippi • Mike Byers '79

#### TENNESSEE

Memphis • Coleman Barron '14  
Nashville • Jamie Ellis '08

#### ALUMNI GROUP LEADERS

Band • Jeff McCrary '83  
Geography • Jessie Baker '12  
Social Work • Stacy Lee '01  
Black Alumni • Nikki Durr '00  
Young Alumni • Emily McCann '13



## message from the ALUMNI PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni and Friends,

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." This Chinese proverb resonates with me personally and resembles many of our individual paths through life since our time at the University of North Alabama. As alumni who have grown and prospered in our careers, we took our first step on this path and changed our lives forever. We continue to find ourselves in a time of constant discovery, remarkable achievements, extraordinary talents and ambitions.

Every day we are each afforded the opportunity to represent UNA through participation in chapter events, community volunteerism, current and future student outreach, and peer-to-peer collaboration. I embrace the challenge and the responsibility of representing your needs and your diverse interests. Through the lens of UNA alumni, your alumni board will work diligently to advance and support university initiatives and to implement the new strategic plan.

This year the alumni association has planned several events to reignite your passion and keep you engaged with the University. Our Alumni Summit in April will provide an opportunity for alumni to network with one another, become informed of the University's events and obtain valuable leadership skills to bring back to the local alumni clubs. Our "Lions Under the Lights" event during the Alumni Association Homecoming Banquet this fall will allow us to stay connected.

If you haven't visited the UNA campus lately, I invite you to do so. As you traverse the university grounds you will see and feel many of the dynamic pieces and key initiatives involved in providing a world class education at an affordable price. In the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Sciences, we are constructing the Laura M. Harrison Hall. It will house the state's premier nursing program. The newly renovated Flowers Hall will showcase our commitment to Division I competitive athletic programs. In addition, our numerous partnerships now include: the City of Florence, Manufacture Alabama, Helen Keller Library, and Huntsville Hospital Health System employees. All are eligible to receive a special scholarship directly from UNA.

I am excited to announce that we have made the first installment of our financial pledge to the UNA Alumni Association Collier Experimental Learning Lab (CELL). By supporting the CELL in Collier Library, we have the opportunity to pay forward some of the rewards we have reaped to benefit a place where many of us spent time pursuing our degrees.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to Bishop Alexander on being selected as our new Director of Alumni Relations. His wisdom and understanding of the many alumni viewpoints along with his passion for impacting lives makes him well suited for the position. He's been a pleasure to work with during the course of these past few months and I look forward to seeing his vision for the alumni association's growth and development.

As we continue the process of growing and implementing this vision, we vitally need the engagement, participation, and support of our stakeholder community and most especially our alumni. Regardless of your reasons at the time, I'm willing to wager that your motivations didn't end at graduation. An innate interest in learning and growing your network, as well as building your financial wealth and enhancing your career, all still exists in you.

Our journey never stops and we can say our foundation forward was paved at the University of North Alabama!

Roar Lions!

**Derrick R. Chatman, PSP® '08**  
2018-2019 Alumni Association President



# ALUMNI PRIDE



Weldon Cole '60 and Jim Page '01



Jeff Daniel '85 and Maray Daniel



Nancy Riggles and Gordon Riggles '81



Alec Page '66 and Marty Abroms '81



Harry Smith '64, Steve Choat '81 and Gaye Choat '81



Deborah Bell Paseur, David Muhlendorf and Liz Muhlendorf



Trent Trammel and Brittany Cagle



Freddie Copeland '77 and Mark Linder





# ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

## David Sunseri

Dr. David Sunseri acknowledges that creativity in all disciplines is necessary to assist in sustaining economic growth. Following this viewpoint, he graciously created the Sunseri Speaker's Series, which has been instrumental in changing how we imagine the intersection of Arts and Sciences. He funded the endowment—which focuses on the integration of arts and creativity with the sciences to drive innovation—in memory of his late sister, Jennifer Leigh Sunseri.

Dr. Sunseri began his collegiate education with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of North Alabama, and continued it at Florida State University by receiving a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry with a focus on chromatography.

In August of 2018, Dr. Sunseri was appointed CEO of PMI BioPharma Solutions. In this position, he is responsible for leading the overall

strategic direction of the company. His previous role as Senior Vice President of Pharmaceutical Development and Chief Business Development Office within PMI Bio held him responsible for leading developmental programs and providing new business opportunities to drive growth for the company.

Dr. Sunseri stays connected to his alma mater by serving on the UNA Foundation Board of Directors. He is the Treasurer of the UNA Foundation, Chair of the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee, and a member of the Executive Committee. He also serves on the University's College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Council.

The Alumni of the Year Award is given annually to alumni of the University who have utilized their degrees earned at the University and made great inroads and successes in their subsequent professions.

# HOMECOMING AWARDS 2018

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



A devoted stalwart of our University and our community, **Joel R. Anderson** has spent a lifetime championing the Shoals. As Chair of Anderson Media, he is widely known as both a dynamic executive and an active civic and community leader. Born and raised in Florence, he has spent the majority of his life focusing on the family-owned business established by his late father, Clyde W. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson serves as Chair and Director of the Anderson Companies and as Chair of Anderson Media. He is currently serving as a UNA Trustee, and in 2015 was awarded an honorary degree in Business from President Kitts. In addition, he is currently a member of the nominating committee of the Alabama Business Hall of Fame.

His philanthropic and leadership efforts have greatly impacted the Shoals, as well as other organizations on national and international levels. He has served as Director and Chair of the Riverhill School Board, Director of the Shoals Chamber of Commerce, Director of First National Bank, Chair and founder of the Florence Library Foundation, Chair of the Shoals Literacy Council, director of the YMCA, and a member of the Florence-Lauderdale Industrial Expansion Committee. He has also



*Joel Anderson, Ashley Anderson, Kristen Anderson and President Ken Kitts*

served as founder, Chair and Director of the American Fireworks Standards Laboratory, and as a trustee of the Cardiovascular Institute of Philadelphia.

Mr. Anderson was the Chair of the 2005 Florence Lauderdale Public Library and raised over \$400,000 at the event which featured Donald Trump. His philanthropic, civic and humanitarian endeavors have also been recognized by the Anti-Defamation League, and by Brandeis University with its National Distinguished Community Service Award. In 2003, he was the first recipient of the 25 Year Club Frank Herrera Award, the prestigious national magazine industry award.

In 2006, he was the Shoals Citizen of the Year and, more recently, was awarded

the Lifetime Achievement and Innovation Award from the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

UNA's Lifetime Achievement Award was created in 1997 to recognize and honor alumni, such as Mr. Anderson, who are leaving lasting impressions on our campus.

## FRIEND OF THE UNIVERSITY



**Bill Matthews** is a native Tennessean, who has lived across the country throughout his life, from New Orleans to Maine to California. He served almost six years in the United States military, splitting his time evenly between the Navy and the Army.

Mr. Matthews graduated from high school in Loretto, Tenn. He then matriculated to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, where he earned High Honors in Sociology. He then enrolled in the University of Tennessee, where he completed his Master's degree in planning, specializing in city, state, and regional planning.

His work life has centered on state government, especially in community and economic development, municipal planning, and, most recently, in continuing education at the university level.

During his more than 15 years of retirement, Mr. Matthews has discovered two new passions in his life: hiking in Europe, which has taken him more than 2,000 miles across the continent and allowed him to visit more than eight countries; and the Singing River Sculpture project, an initiative that honors the musical heritage of Muscle Shoals. Based on his love of travel, he has given more than \$25,000 to UNA so that students may also travel and study abroad.

His only child, Mason Matthews, is a graduate of the UNA geography department and a part-time photographer for the UNA athletic department.

Mr. Matthews plans to spend his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in November hiking in Ireland with his son.

In a class by themselves, The Friend of the University Award honors those who promote the mission of the University by donating their time, resources, and energy. Their work is a labor of love. They're patrons, silently seeking to select deserving causes and special interests where they can share their expertise and passion.

## FACULTY / STAFF SERVICE



For the past 17 years, **Dr. Matthew Schoenbachler** has been a dedicated professor of history at UNA.

Dr. Schoenbachler graduated from UNA in 1989 and continued his education at the University of Kentucky where he earned a Master of Arts in 1992, and a Ph.D. in 1996. Dr. Schoenbachler's teaching career began at Georgetown College, progressed to Kentucky Wesleyan College and eventually back to his alma mater in 2001.

Dr. Schoenbachler is a historian of the early American Republic. His publications include authoring *Murder and Madness: The Myth of the Kentucky Tragedy*, and co-authoring *When the Cold War Stood Still: Nikita Khrushchev's Journey into 1950s America*, and *The Norton Mix: American History*. He is currently working on a number of projects, including a history of the Andrew Jackson's Bank War, the trans-Appalachian origins of the Jacksonian movement, and the use of cannabis in antebellum America.

He is a decorated professor with previous awards including Teacher of the Year at Kentucky Wesleyan College and President-Elect of the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History. He has earned multiple faculty research grants from UNA, served as the History Department Liaison in the U.S. Department of Education, been interviewed by WUKY, and presented lectures for the Filson Historical Society and Kentucky Live.

He also worked tirelessly to establish the successful Larry Nelson Lecture Series. Nelson, a contemporary of Dr. Schoenbachler, passed away in January of 2014 after teaching at UNA for 30 years and touching the lives of thousands of students.

The Faculty/Staff Service Awards are presented to successful alumni that work among peers on this campus. These award winners possess far-reaching, long-term involvement and influence with students, organizations, and colleagues at the University.

## EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR



In 1988, **Dr. Lisa Graves-Minor** returned to her alma mater but this time behind the lectern doing what she loved most – teaching. When she graduated from UNA in 1980, she continued her education by receiving a Ph.D. in English and serving as a teaching fellow at Vanderbilt University. From there she started her career in academia at Alabama A&M as a teacher in the Department of English.

However, it wasn't long before her love for UNA brought her back to campus where she had been a very active and popular undergraduate. Dr. Graves-Minor was a model initiate and founding member of Delta Sigma Theta, a top five competitor in the Miss UNA pageant, and a member of the homecoming court.

Dr. Graves-Minor has been awarded Outstanding Alumnus, membership to Sigma Tau Delta, Outstanding Faculty Member, Eleanor Gaunder Teaching Excellence Award, Laura Harrison Distinguished Professor of English, President's Award of Excellence, Who's Who Among America's Teachers, Alpha Lambda Delta Outstanding Teaching Award, and the Faculty/Staff Alumni Service Award. She has served as the University Ombudsman and is currently a professor emerita in UNA's Department of English.

The Educator of the Year award is most appropriate as the University has a long-standing reputation as an outstanding institution for teacher education and administration. UNA was a state normal school, then a state teachers college and ultimately, a fine institute of Higher Education.

# HOMECOMING AWARDS 2018

## POLITICAL SERVICE



**Chris D. Jackson** graduated in 2011 from UNA's political science program with a good amount of knowledge plus experience in the world of politics. Elected as Lawrence County, Tennessee's District 2 Commissioner at age 19, he is the youngest person ever elected to public office in Lawrence County, and one of the youngest in Tennessee state history.

Jackson serves as Chair of three County Commission committees: the Facilities, School Board Liaison and Technology committees. From 2014 to 2017, he was chosen by his colleagues to serve as Chair Pro Tempore of the board.

He is currently employed with Tennessee Tech University where he serves as Site Coordinator for Distance Education in Lawrence County. Previously, he was employed with the Lawrence County Sheriff's Department for nearly a decade. Jackson is also a Tennessee Notary Public.

Mr. Jackson is an active member and past Vice President of the Loretto Lions Club and a member of the Lawrence County Public Records Commission, Lawrence County Resource Conservation and Development program, Young Elected Officials Network, and Next Generation NACo Network. He has served two terms as Vice Chair and Chair of the Lawrence County Democratic Party. He was recognized for his leadership by the National Associations of Counties in 2011, and was selected as the State Director for the Young Elected Officials Network in Tennessee in 2013.

The Political Service award is given each year to an alumnus of the University who has contributed greatly to society within the realm of local, state or national governance.

## MILITARY SERVICE



**LTC Mark Morgan** received an Army ROTC scholarship to attend UNA after an exemplary completion of Basic Combat Training. He excelled in his studies and was named a Distinguished Military Graduate with a Bachelor of Science

in Chemistry and a minor in Music in 1991. After receiving his degree, LTC Morgan was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps and entered active duty in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps.

LTC Morgan continued his education at Oral Roberts University, where he received his Master of Divinity Degree in 2006. In 2012, he earned his Master of Military Art and Science from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College where he is endorsed as a chaplain by the Chaplaincy of Full Gospel Churches.

LTC Morgan has served the 5-101<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion as the Battalion Chemical Office, the Battalion Refuel Platoon Leader, and the Headquarters Company Executive Officer. After turning his focus to ministry, he transferred to the Oklahoma Army National Guard and was deployed to Iraq as a chaplain from 2004 to 2005.

LTC Morgan graduated from the Chaplain Captain's Career Course and moved to the Presidio of Monterey, California, and served as the senior Battalion chaplain in the 229th Military Intelligence Battalion. No matter where duty takes him, LTC Morgan has served our country with strength and devotion while representing his alma mater, UNA.

The Military Service Awards recognize the best of the best. These are the men and women from our armed services who have chosen careers dedicated to the service of our country and to the protection of each one of us.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE



**Carnette Robinson Johnson** knew that UNA was in the stars for her early in life. She made her decision on a sixth grade field trip to the University's planetarium. Seven years later she moved in to Rice Hall as freshman, in the shadow of that same planetarium and still looking toward the heavens!

In 1983, the Athens native graduated with a degree in accounting much to the pride of her parents, Carnell and Geraldine Robinson. More recently and to continue her education, Ms. Johnson graduated with an Executive MBA from UNA just last year.

Now a resident of Atlanta, Ms. Johnson maintains an active connection to the University. Since 2012, she has served as UNA's Alumni Club President for the Greater Atlanta area where she assists with keeping our alumni engaged and with the recruitment of our future Lions. She also chairs a UNA Alumni committee called "The Flashback Committee" – a group of African American UNA alumni who plan events during homecoming to enhance alumni diversity in UNA involvement. She is an active member of UNA's College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Council.

Ms. Johnson also offers her talents to the greater Atlanta community. She has been active in local Parent/Teacher groups and has attended the Parent Leadership Academy for her county. She has participated in the Everybody Wins Atlanta reading program, Time N Talent, and on Relay for Life fundraising committees.

Since 1993, Ms. Johnson has made a career in the glue applicator machinery industry. Using her accounting background, she has successfully assisted in the implementation of a global accounting module called R3P.

For service to her community, the Alumni Association recognizes Carnette Robinson Johnson as a model citizen who has provided long-term involvement professionally and as a volunteer to the community in which she lives.

## PROMISING ALUMNI



**Kristen Anderson** is an Honors College student serving on the Honors College Advisory Council. She is the vice president of the Financial Intelligence Network, a member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and a member of Beta Gamma Sigma International Honor Society in Business.



**Rebecca Bush** has served as a Student Leadership Consultant in the Office of Student Engagement, vice president of the SGA University Program Council, and a Disability Support Service Mentor. She was previously an ambassador of the HSHD Department, a leader within the Baptist Campus Ministries, a member of SGAs Freshman Forum, Service Committee Chairwoman, and University Program Council Pro Tempore. She is a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Alpha Kappa Delta honor societies.



**Nikki Mathews** has been involved with SGA as associate justice, treasurer, and member of Freshman Forum. She has held numerous leadership positions during her student tenure being a SOAR Counselor, Alternative Breaks program site leader, and a Lagrange Society Ambassador, and she has served as both treasurer and president of Phi Mu Fraternity. Nikki is the recipient of the University Undergraduate Service Award, was named the College of Business Student of the Month, and was elected by her peers to the 2017 Homecoming Court.



**Courtney Phifer** is a member of the Society of Physics Students, the National Honor Society of Leadership and Success, and the Student Chapter of the American Chemical Society. She has represented UNA two summers at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, and has served as a math, chemistry, and physics volunteer tutor. Courtney was the recipient of the

Exemplary Leadership Award at the United States Space and Rocket Center.



**Dustin Phillips** is the president of the Collaborative Education Service Organization, the founder of Lion Buddies, and a member of the Elementary Education Advisory Board. He has previously served as the president of Elementary Education Research Organization, chairman of the UNA College Republicans, SGA Senator, chairman of the Budget Oversight Committee, and treasurer of the Multicultural Education Club. Dustin is the recipient of the Victoria Hulsey Award and the 2018 University Student Employee of the Year.



**Dylan Rose** is an Honors College student who has served as the Commander of the UNA Lagrange Society Ambassadors. He is a Resident Advisor and the former president of Encounter.



**Abigail Sides** is the current president of Beta Alpha Psi, Lead Student Ambassador of the College of Business, and a student teaching assistant in Huai'an, China, for the College of Business's 1+2+1 Program. She is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies.



**Nicholas Smith** is a member of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity, a Leadership and Volunteerism intern for the Alternative Breaks program, former co-captain of the UNA Lagrange Society Ambassadors, and SOAR counselor. Nicholas has held several positions in SGA including Freshman Forum Social Committee, vice president of the University Programming Council, and Mane Month Chairman. He is a member of the Gamma Sigma Alpha Greek Academic Honor Society, a recipient of the University Undergraduate Service Award, and the 2017-2018 UNA Homecoming King.

UNA faculty and staff nominate seniors excelling in leadership, scholastics, character, service, and potential to receive the Promising Alumni Award. We are proud of their service to the University and we believe they will be outstanding alumni leaders in the future.



Tina Smith '00

At the University of North Alabama, the College of Education and Human Sciences positions their students as knowledge builders. As an innovative and collaborative program that listens and responds not only to the needs of their students but also to the needs of their faculty, the college has created an open source learning environment where creativity and modernization thrive.

**Tina Smith**, who graduated with a master's degree in mental health counseling in 2000, is a testament to how vital institutional culture is to higher education. "Understanding and appreciating one's institution provides context to how a university operates, how they interact with and who they are," Smith said. "Knowing the culture allows leadership to execute management of the institution in ways that are more efficient and effective."

Smith currently works as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives in Development and Alumni Relations at Vanderbilt University where she interacts with the Vanderbilt alumni in a variety of ways to engage with their alma mater. Leading into her role as vice chancellor, Smith was an inaugural Chancellor's Higher Education Fellow and an Assistant Vice Chancellor working with the Office of the Chancellor on university strategic initiatives and priorities. Smith has cultivated positive change on Vanderbilt's campus by leading the renovation and establishment of a variety of campus-wide projects.



## ALUMNI Spotlights

Success in the College of Education is highly connected to great mentorship. Professors are there to guide their students on their journey to becoming teachers themselves. To be a good mentor requires hard work, time dedication, and the courage to speak the truth when you know it may not be what the person wants to hear. The mentor's relationship is key not only to an individual's development but also to the organization's development.

Mentorship has played a significant role in Smith's life. "Mentors in either a formal or informal capacity have been a part of my personal and professional development," she said. "While at UNA, I had several mentors like Dr. Thomas Lovett and Ms. Barbara Morgan who guided me through the challenges and transitions into adulthood."

Smith has had an incredibly successful career as an administrator in higher education and has witnessed significant changes over the years. She believes that the most critical aspect of education is student activism and their relationship with the administrators. "Students are looking for their voice to be heard regarding social justice issues; in fact, I think many view it as their responsibility and right to engage in activism," said Smith. "The intersection of both student and administrators existing in harmony to one another is achieved when all can

come to the table to engage in dialogue regarding the intended goals and outcomes when possible."

In her long career, Smith attributes her success to hard work and being a spiritual person, which was instilled in her by her siblings and parents. She also links her accomplishments to her time at the University of North Alabama. "Having the opportunity to attend UNA and obtain both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in an environment that was nurturing, supportive, and welcoming was a blessing and something I often reflect on and share with others when they ask about my college experience."

While Smith went on to a career in higher education, many graduates also look to teaching at the elementary and high school levels, incorporating the human science side of the program.

**Garrett Keith**, a 2004 graduate, found his passion in student athletic programs, specifically strength and conditioning.

With 15 years of coaching experience under his belt, Keith has made it his priority to care more about the person than the player. Currently, he is a coach at Westminster Christian Academy in Huntsville where he was recently awarded the 2019 NHSSCA National Coach of the Year.

Keith has always been a student-athlete himself from middle school all the way to playing football during his time at



Garrett Keith '04

UNA. "I had some incredible coaches and teachers that made a lasting impact on my development," he said. "The common factor between all of them is how they loved their students and did everything they could to help make a positive impact."

It was those teachers and coaches that inspired Keith to pursue education and coaching. Beginning as a first-year teacher and football coach at American Christian Academy in Tuscaloosa, he began to realize that strength training was what he was genuinely interested in. "As a student-athlete, it was something that I loved and what gave me a chance to compete," Keith said. "The first few years of coaching at ACA I realized my biggest passion wasn't on the football field, but instead it was in the weight room."

This year was Keith's first not being a position coach for the football team and it has given him more time to devote to the rest of the student population. Being able to step away from being a position coach has allowed him to work with other coaches and develop the program further. "I genuinely love what I do," Keith said. "The highlight of my workday is getting to see my students. There is nothing better than walking into a room knowing that you get a chance to make an impact. As cliché as it sounds, when you love what you do you never work a day in your life."



## Travel with the Lions!

[una.edu/alumni/travel](http://una.edu/alumni/travel)



### ALASKA DISCOVERY LAND & CRUISE

August 27 - September 8



### MAJESTIC VISTAS

October 27 - November 4



# CLASS NOTES

## 1960s

**Gen. Richard F. Allen '63** has been distinguished as an Outstanding Alumnus of the Army War College. Gen. Allen is a 1963 graduate and has a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry.

## 1980s

**Pamela Ahrens '84** has been hired by Pinnacle Financial Partners with their IT systems team at the Mt. Juliet office. Ahrens comes to Pinnacle with 25 years in the field, previously working for CGS Administrators. Ahrens graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management.

**Britt Richards '87** was inducted into the Alabama Manufactured Housing Industry Hall of Fame. Richards is the Vice President of Operations and Marketing for Clayton Home Building Group. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science.

**Joseph "Rich" Baldwin '89** has been promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Arizona National Guard. Gen. Baldwin graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1989.

**Anne Whitaker '89** has been named Chief Executive Officer and Director of Dance Biopharm Holdings, Inc.

## 1990s

**Bob Godsey '94** is the new head football coach at Madison Academy in Madison, Alabama. Godsey won a 5A

State Championship coaching at Hartselle High School, and been named 5A Coach of the Year twice. Godsey has a Master of Arts degree in Education.

**Jeremy Rogers '97** was recently named the Chief Financial Officer at St. Francis Medical Center in Monroe, Louisiana. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science.

**Garth Garris '98** has been honored as TSAA District 4 Principal of the Year. Garris is currently the principal of Lincoln County High School in Fayetteville, Tennessee. Garris graduated with a Master of Arts in Education.

**Reginald Ruffin '98** was recently named the new Director of Athletics at Miles College. He graduated from UNA with a master's degree in Education Administration.

## 2000s

**Nesha Donaldson '00** was appointed chief operations officer of Cullman Regional Medical Center; Donaldson has filled the role in conjunction with her chief financial officer position at the hospital for more than a year. Donaldson graduated with a Master of Business Administration.

**Robert Rogers '01** has been elected President of the Mississippi Association of Nurse Anesthetists. Rogers currently works at the North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo, Mississippi. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

**Josh G. McFall '07** has been appointed by the Mayor of Huntsville, Alabama, to serve on the Urban Development Advisory Council. McFall has a Bachelor of Science in Communication.

**Allison Albert '08** was awarded the Teacher of the Year award for Madison County Schools. Albert is a kindergarten teacher at Madison Cross Roads Elementary School. She

graduated from UNA in 2008 with a bachelor's in Elementary Education, and was named Miss UNA in 2008.

**Jamie Ellis '08** recently became the Director of Communications and Campaigns at Soles4Souls in Nashville, Tennessee. Ellis graduated with a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications with an emphasis in public relations.



**Dr. Chad Holden '02**, Principal of Muscle Shoals High School, was named the 2019 Alabama High School Principal of the Year by the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools. Dr. Holden holds three UNA degrees: a Bachelor of Science in Education in 2002, a Master of Arts in Education in 2005, and an Educational Specialist

degree in 2010. He is also a strong partner in the work of UNA's College of Education and Human Sciences. Holden has worked in education for 17 years with seven as an administrator in the Muscle Shoals School District. He has been principal at Muscle Shoals High School since 2014.



**Mallory Howe '08** recently became the children's services specialist at the Albertville Public Library. Howe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish.

**Connie Geimer '09** recently joined Floyd Primary Care in Piedmont, Alabama, as a nurse practitioner. She is a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, American Association of Critical Care Nurses, Emergency Nurse Practitioners Association, and the Emergency Nurses Association. Geimer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing.

**A.J. Milwee '09** will join the University of Alabama's football program as an offensive analyst. Milwee was quarterback for the Lions from 2006-2008, where he rewrote the record books for passing. Milwee is a 2009 graduate with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance.

**2010s**

**Taylor Goodwin '17** has been hired as a Technical Writer with the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville. Goodwin is a 2017 graduate with a Bachelor of Science in English.

## University of NORTH ALABAMA 2019 HOMECOMING SEPTEMBER 27-28

### Friday, September 27

<b>Jack Karnes Memorial Golf Tournament</b>	8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. • Cypress Lakes Golf & Country Club
<b>Homecoming Alumni Awards Banquet</b>	6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. • GUC Banquet Halls
<b>Homecoming Pep Rally</b>	9:30 p.m. • Soccer Field

### Saturday, September 28

<b>Homecoming 5K</b>	8:00 a.m. • Harrison Plaza
<b>SGA Past Officers Breakfast</b>	8:00 a.m. • GUC Loft
<b>Athletic Hall of Fame Induction</b>	9:00 a.m. • GUC Performance Center
<b>Homecoming Parade</b>	10:30 a.m. • Downtown Florence
<b>Tailgating</b>	11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. • Braly Stadium • Spirit Hill/Spirit Quad
<b>Golden Lions 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion • Class of 1969</b>	Noon • Rogers Hall
<b>Lion Walk</b>	12:45 p.m. • Braly Stadium • Spirit Hill
<b>Pre-Game Show</b>	2:20 p.m. • Braly Stadium • Florence
<b>UNA vs Presbyterian College</b>	3:00 p.m. • Braly Stadium • Florence

# Q&A WITH BISHOP ALEXANDER '09

Director of Alumni Relations



## Full name?

Justin Matthew Alexander

## Nickname

Bishop

## Purpose of Nickname

Before I transferred to UNA in Fall 2005, I attended Itawamba Community College in Fulton, Mississippi, after high school. While I was in junior college, I was involved in a college teen ministry that traveled the world. While attending a ministry event, I met one of the youngest archbishops in America. I was surprised to see someone so young in a position that was usually reserved for ministry leaders who are older. My friends decided to give me the nickname Bishop. Since that time I took on the nickname and prefer to be called by that, because of my faith but also because I'm now a pastor as well.

## Where were you born?

Iuka, Mississippi

## What attracted you to this position?

What attracted me to this position is the opportunity to give



## Alumni Relations team!

*Bishop Alexander, Director of Alumni Relations and  
Sherry Wilkes, Senior Administrative Assistant*

back to my alma mater. As a first generation college student from a small town in Mississippi, this is a reminder that we can do anything we set our minds to. Growing up in a single parent household was not easy but my mother made it her mission to make sure we understood the value and benefits of a college education. She encouraged us to pursue our dreams and never allow doubt to keep us from moving forward. I've been involved with the UNA Alumni Association since I graduated college in 2009, and through that I have been able to stay connected to the University and volunteer on numerous projects with faculty, staff, students, and alumni. My goal in my new role is to take everything I've learned and use it to the best of my ability to make sure the Office of Alumni Relations can provide as many opportunities to help our alumni stay informed, connected, and involved.

### **Biggest challenges?**

One of the biggest challenges for any alumni relations office is making sure you are keeping up with the current trends happening around you. I made sure to surround myself with the best and brightest leaders who represent our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. Whether it's technology or social media, I have to always make sure we are communicating the right information to our global alumni base so they can stay current with what's happening at the University of North Alabama. I have an open door policy with my staff and alumni so they can share their ideas with me as we move forward as a Division I institution.

### **Favorite thing about UNA?**

My favorite thing about UNA are the events we host because they bring together our campus community. As

a former admissions counselor, I would always end my recruitment speeches by encouraging students and parents to attend our events so they could experience everything they have read about in our promotional brochures and seen on our social media platforms. Whether it's homecoming, graduation, or Step Sing, words alone cannot express watching our campus and community come together to support a noble cause. A picture is worth a thousand words, but the UNA experience will take your breath away.

### **What do you do in your free time?**

I like to spend my free time with family and friends. When my mother passed away three years ago, I learned the true meaning of family during the darkest moment of my life. During her memorial service, my co-workers and members of the UNA community were there to support me. I didn't even know they were coming but when I saw them, it was a reminder that we are more than just a university we are family. I have a big family so we find every reason to come together as much as possible to fellowship with one another to celebrate birthdays, special occasions, take vacations together, and fellowship with one another at holiday gatherings.

### **Favorite Movie?**

I enjoy watching movies, especially action, comedy, and fantasy.

I have a lot of favorite movies, but the main one is *Hocus Pocus*. I know it's a Disney film but ever since the fourth grade, I watch it at least once during the month of October. It's a family comedy movie for all ages that can be passed down to future generations.



# IN MEMORY

## YEARS UNIDENTIFIED

**William Armfield**  
September 4, 1921 – February 18, 2018

**Anne Patton (Schell) Boles**  
January 22, 1948 – August 17, 2018

**Marie Cooper Ellison**  
July 21, 1921 – February 16, 2019

**Christine Paschke Finley**  
August 2, 1926 – September 10, 2013

**Marsha Denise Franks**  
February 28, 2019

**Michael T. Sweda**  
June 15, 2013

**Nell Miles Warren**  
April 29, 1930 – February 25, 2019

## FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY

**Edwin E. Dacus, Jr.**  
February 7, 1914 – December 16, 2000

**Bernard “Barney” Davis**  
December 7, 1930 – November 6, 2018

**Doris Randle Dean**  
February 21, 1932 – February 19, 2019

**Ernest L. McClure**  
May 8, 1922 – November 2, 2012

**LT Colonel James Lambert Roberts**  
July 7, 1918 – June 26, 2016

**Russell Rowe**  
July 23, 2018

**Yelena Sobolevskaya**  
October 4, 2017

**Charles W. Weisenseel**  
December 13, 1933 – June 23, 2010

## FACULTY AND STAFF

### 1930s

**Elizabeth Dillard Blakeney ’39**  
August 28, 1920 – November 1, 2013

### 1940s

**Violet E. Hand ’49**  
August 28, 1927 – October 10, 2006

### 1950s

**Eugene Pickard ’50**  
September 9, 2018

**Dr. Elizabeth C. Mitchell Walter ’57**  
February 19, 1936 – January 1, 2019

**Jack David Lard ’58**

August 29, 1936 – June 9, 2018

### 1960s

**Judge Billy C. Burney ’60**  
February 14, 1936 – November 3, 2018

### 1970s

**James Dwight Hill ’71**  
October 25, 1946 – July 1, 2018

**Sherron Ann Justice ’74**

June 9, 1952 – January 28, 2004

### 1980s

**Barry A. Hollander ’81**  
September 2, 1958 – January 30, 2018

**Dorothy M. Saving ’85**

January 26, 1945 – December 3, 2013

### 2000s

**Catherine Call Lennartz ’02**  
June 24, 2018

### 1950s

**Frank Earnest Jr. ’51**  
March 9, 1928 – February 10, 2019

**Ann (Streit) Raburn ’53**

November 10, 1932 – January 28, 2019

**Herman H. Bittinger ’56**

June 26, 2014

**Dr. Jack H. Wilhelm ’59**

August 12, 1939 – February 7, 2016

### 1960s

**Jim Newman ’60**  
December 2, 1936 – April 11, 2014

**John Danley Abston ’61**

September 7, 1938 – January 28, 2019

### Joe L. Beard ’62

August 4, 1938 – February 10, 2019

### William Spruell Bowen ’62

February 15, 2019

### Frances (Sims) McKenzie ’62

February 1, 2019

### James Raymond Autry ’64

February 7, 2019

### Foster Feagin Fountain III ’67

September 14, 1944 – February 1, 2019

### Bill Francis Guest ’67

May 17, 1942 – September 16, 2011

### 1970s

### Constance (Connie) Faye Evans ’72

March 21, 1949 – June 27, 2018

### Willodean Moore Blalock ’74

May 9, 2015

### Barbara Connell (Reynolds) Davis ’74

March 2, 2019

### Margaret Letson ’76

February 2, 2016

### Chief Master Sergeant Robert Edward Clark ’77

May 20, 1930 – February 3, 2019

### 1980s

### Timothy Paul Walton ’86

May 8, 1962 – May 27, 2015

### 1990s

### Brian Keith Nix ’90

October 1, 1968 – February 3, 2019

### Clem William Akins III ’94

September 8, 1962 – December 17, 2012

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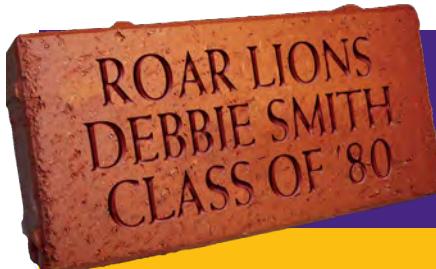
## LEAVE YOUR TRACKS ON A LIVING TRADITION

The University of North Alabama has made great impressions on the lives of many alumni and friends of the University. Now, you have the opportunity to leave a permanent mark on campus with an engraved brick. Help further the mission of UNA with your contribution.

Bricks are laid in one of two primary locations, the Victory Flame Garden and The Commons walkway. Each marker can feature the graduate's name, year of graduation, specific major or extracurricular activity (fraternity or sorority affiliation,

football or other sport, band, SGA, etc.). The cost of each 4-by-8-inch brick is \$100, which includes three lines of text at a maximum of 20 characters per row. All proceeds from brick orders will benefit the 1830 Fund, which supports immediate campus needs.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to commemorate and celebrate your personal contribution to the rich tradition of excellence that has flourished and thrived at UNA since 1830. Your gift is 100 percent tax deductible.



*Give a gift that stands the test of time!*  
**PERFECT FOR: Graduation • Birthdays • Holidays**

### CONTACT

Office of Alumni Relations • UNA Box 5047 • Florence, AL 35632-0001 • 256.765.4201



### ALUMNI INFORMATION UPDATE

Name (include maiden name if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation Year(s) and Major(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Business telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

**I want to get involved with UNA alumni in my area...**

<input type="checkbox"/> Local Club Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Homecoming	<input type="checkbox"/> Alumni Committee Assignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruit Students	<input type="checkbox"/> Reunions

Have you won an award, changed jobs, earned a promotion or completed another degree?

Your UNA classmates would like to know more about it! Send us your news and we will publish it in a subsequent issue of the *University of North Alabama Magazine*. Please complete the form and send it to the Office of Alumni Relations, UNA Box 5047, Florence, AL 35632-0001 or e-mail to [alumni1@una.edu](mailto:alumni1@una.edu).

[una.edu/alumni](http://una.edu/alumni)

### UPDATE YOUR RECORDS

# Tell them where you're from with a brand new UNA tag!

Not only are you showing your pride, but you're also helping students achieve success!  
Every time you purchase your UNA car tag, \$47.50\* of your \$50 fee  
will go directly to student scholarships.

## **EVERYBODY WINS!**



### ***Just how impactful is this?***

Money raised from the purchase of car tags allowed UNA to award **\$60K** in scholarships this year!

**YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY**

#Get It! #Scholarships #Make A Difference

\* tax deductible as per IRS regulations



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## Office of ALUMNI RELATIONS

*We want to hear from you and we want you to stay connected!*

# ALUMNI UPDATE

New job, new title...Let us know what information has changed and you may even end up in the Class Notes Section for all your friends to see! Also, be sure to give us your current email address, so you can receive updates and event notifications!

### VISIT

[una.edu/alumni/alumni-update-form.html](http://una.edu/alumni/alumni-update-form.html)

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